

Thyferra: Bacta Basics

Planet Hoppers: November 2003

By [Cory Herndon](#)

Welcome to "Planet Hoppers," where each month, we bring you a set of articles on a particular world in the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* galaxy that a Gamemaster can use separately or as a linked series of events.

This month, a tale of corporate espionage on the planet Thyferra, the source of the miraculous medicine bacta. Be sure to check back each week for a new installment.

Part 1: The Thriving Season

In which a freelance corporate spy turns triple-agent on Thyferra, heart of the Bacta Cartel.

Part 2: Ashern to Ashern

In which the Bloodletter takes on a partner, a Vratix scientist with rebellious connections.

Part 3: Fields of Dreams

In which our corporate spy hero inspects the alazhi fields of Thyferra and receives a rude surprise.

Part 4: The Kolcta Generation

In which the Vratix secret is revealed, and the Bloodletter's objective laid bare.

About the Author

One-time *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* editor Cory J. Herndon is now a freelancer. Cory's work has appeared in *Amazing Stories*, *Duelist*, *TopDeck*, *Star Wars Gamer*, *Dragon*, and *SCIFI.com*. He has done additional design work on the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* revised core rulebook (primarily the Droids chapter), *The Dark Side Sourcebook* (creatures and archetypes), and the *Wheel of Time Roleplaying Game*. He is also the author of Volumes 5 and 6 of the **Magic: The Gathering Encyclopedia**. Cory's short story "Like Spider's Silk" appears in the *Secrets of Magic* Anthology. He asks that you please purchase a copy of it and the **D&D** novel *The Living Dead* for every room in your home. Cory is currently authoring original content for Xbox.com, writing the third book in an upcoming *Magic: The Gathering* novel trilogy, and continuing to design *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* material for the Wizards website.



Part 1: The Thriving Season

Compiled by Cory J. Herndon

Historical Notes

Decades before the Empire rose to power and placed de facto control of the planet in the hands of two companies, Thyferra -- homeworld of the insectoid Vratix -- was one of the most economically volatile worlds in the Republic, in no small part because of its uniqueness. Thyferra, of course, is the only known source of pure bacta, the miracle fluid that can heal almost any wound short of dismemberment or disintegration. (While Vratix colony worlds produce bacta in other sectors, few believe any of these colonies would last a single year without support from Thyferra and the Bacta Cartel.)

For hundreds of years, since at least the time of the last great Sith war, the Thyferran government was largely an extension of two major bacta-production corporations -- Xucphra and Zaltin, both owned outright by Human interests in the Core. Under these small bureaucracies, millions of Vratix labored to create bacta, ostensibly without complaint. Indeed, to most in the corporate world, the arrangement seemed too good to be true. The Vratix didn't need to be coaxed into doing the bulk of the work; the insectoids didn't even want to run things. And since the creation of bacta was impossible without certain natural chemicals produced by the Vratix themselves, they knew they could not be removed from the equation by force. It seemed a perfect arrangement, so long as the Vratix felt they were being treated more or less fairly.

Just before Palpatine was elected Chancellor, a string of scandals involving corporate payoffs to a nominally Vratix-controlled government erupted, followed soon after by the revelation that Xucphra and Zaltin corporations, the behemoths that together formed the Bacta Cartel, had sabotaged their own alazhi fields in an effort to hike the price of bacta galaxywide. These shocking events inspired the usually anti-bureaucratic natives to take a more active role in their planet's government, showing concern about Thyferra's standing in the galaxy at large in what even corporate opponents saw as an elegantly bloodless coup.

For about a ten-year period after the Trade Federation's defeat at Naboo -- a time called Alazhixazha (or "Thriving Season") by the Vratix, and the "Vratix Occupation" by galactic corporate interests -- Xucphra and Zaltin were forced to toe the Vratix line. The insectoids forced the Cartel to compete with a number of local companies and "alien" business interests, even the Hutts, in a freewheeling open market that saw consumer awareness of the wonder medicine skyrocket from the Rim to the Core.

For this single decade in the last thousand years, Thyferra's capital regained its ancient Vratix name, Xozhixi. Humans still ran many of the administrative bureaucracies on Thyferra, especially those involving business, but the Vratix watched them like hawkbats. And at least one Human worked directly for the Vratix revolutionaries who would one day be known as the Ashern or "Black Claw" insurgent group, still in its infancy.

The Thriving Season is still a popular and colorful setting for many gritty holosericals well into the New Republic period, but the most legendary tale is actually a true story. Not long after the Bacta War, the infamous Human spy still known only as the Bloodletter released his (or her) memoirs of life at the time, *Thrive or Die*. The following holotranscripts were read personally by Bloodletter via closed-circuit holo (Bloodletter's voice was disguised), transmitted from an unknown location, and they have recently gone on display at the New Republic Historical Archive on Coruscant. Though the Bloodletter is no doubt well into his or her golden years, his or her identity remains a mystery -- most likely on Thyferra itself.



This month, a section of the author's introduction to *Thrive or Die*.

Planet: Thyferra
Planet Type: Terrestrial
Climate: Tropical
Terrain: Forests, tropical jungles
Atmosphere: Breathable
Gravity: Standard
Diameter: 10,221 km
Length of Day: 21.3 standard hours
Length of Year: 479 local days
Sentient Species: Humans, Vratix
Language: Basic, Vratix
Population: 117 million
Species Mix: (Thriving Season) 84% Vratix, 12% Human, 4% other; (Imperial) 72% Vratix, 28% Human
Government: (Thriving Season) Planetary representative democracy; (Imperial) Corporate plutocracy
Major Exports: Bacta
Major Imports: Technology, foodstuffs
System/Star: Polith

Planets	Type	Moons
Polixi	Barren Rock	-
Loxizhra	Desert	5
Polith Belt	Asteroid Field	-
Thyferra	Terrestrial	2
Iqobal	Gas Giant	54
Ferxani	Gas Giant	33
Renas	Ice Ball	3

Region: Inner Rim

Thrive or Die: Memoirs of the Bloodletter

Dear [REDACTED] Graduate,

You've put in the hardest six years of study in your life. And what have you got to show for it? Endless loan payments and a mountain of student debt. A "competitive" market for dead-end Hutt accounting jobs on the Outer Rim. And a family demanding to know how their investment in your education will pay off.

But you don't have to settle for a life of toil and struggle. Consider the Xucphra corporation, located conveniently on the tropical Inner Rim paradise planet Thyferra. We're always looking for qualified Humans -- and only Humans -- to join the Xucphra team. Recent events have led to a staffing shortfall, and we're offering an extremely lucrative hiring package for [REDACTED] graduates that fit your profile.

Please consider attending our informative seminar at [REDACTED] on [REDACTED]. We're sure we've got a position waiting for you.

The seminar had indeed been informative, more than Xucphra knew. Their methods were not noticeably different from the Zaltin recruiters, with whom I had met weeks before.

The Bacta Cartel is like a gargantuan broken family. They're forced to stay together for financial reasons, a joint operating agreement that chafed especially hard during the Thriving Season. It was all the two companies could do to share financial information and for corporate officers to remain civil. Hiring records, recruitment efforts, and employment figures were still held closely secret by each side.

It was the perfect time for a smart third-party operator to play both ends against the middle. And that's exactly what the Vratix wanted me to arrange. I accepted the job once they doubled my pay and offered me permanent asylum should anything go wrong.

But I would have done it anyway. I'm the Bloodletter, and I work for the side with the most credits.

Part 2: Ashern to Ashern

Compiled by Cory J. Herndon

Historical Notes

The self-described "freelance corporate espionage specialist" known as the Bloodletter worked for both sides of the Bacta Cartel -- as a double-agent for the young Ashern revolutionary group -- during the heady time known on Thyferra as the Thriving Season. During this brief period (which coincided almost exactly with Chancellor Palpatine's first ten years in office), Thyferra's bacta market was freed from absolute Cartel control, an era that most believe was a direct result of a Vratix uprising that saw them retake their own government and planet, even if only for ten years. Now the Bloodletter's memoirs finally shed more light on how the Vratix took Thyferra back, and how they lost it again.

This month's installment, transcribed from portions of a new NR Historical Archive exhibit, describes further details of the Bloodletter's mission in Thyferra during the Thriving Season.

Thrive or Die: Memoirs of the Bloodletter

Excerpted from Chapter 3: Hive-Bound

With a pair of separate cover identities established for both Xucphra and Zaltin consumption, it was time to get to work. The Vratix that hired me to infiltrate the Cartel -- they called themselves the Asherns, or Razorclaws, something like that -- spared no expense ensuring that both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had complete educational histories, references that would actually hold up, and even two separate families -- one on [REDACTED] and another on [REDACTED]. Of course, I hadn't given them any choice in the matter. I wouldn't take the job until those safeguards were in place. I feel not a whit of shame when I say that ultimately the Bloodletter's first and only client is the Bloodletter. That's why I have never spent longer than an hour in any prison, and then only twice.

I must admit that Thraxx, my primary Ashern contact, was the one who hit upon a believable way for me to work full-time for each company, a problem that had been posing some difficulty even for me. Xuczal City -- recently renamed Xozhixi -- was a company town, at least during daylight hours. Most Humans spent their entire careers within the city limits, and a Human only willing to work half-weeks would raise too many eyebrows, considering my ultimate goal.

Instead, I would take work for each company as a field inspector, one of the few jobs in bacta production that both Vratix and Humans performed in equal numbers. I suspect it's because neither species really trusts the other, and they shouldn't. If trust was possible, I wouldn't be here. Field inspectors, as the name implies, roved the planet ensuring that the alazhi plants were healthy, watching for blights and other plant diseases, and enforcing proper harvesting methods. Usually, only Vratix field inspectors bothered to monitor the actual process of bacta creation, so I didn't bother to go underground; that would only have attracted attention. But I didn't need access to bacta production facilities to get my job done. I simply needed to be able to move about freely and access both Xucphra and Zaltin records. My primary mission involved the alazhi, which grew aboveground. I went into each office once a week (officially) to file reports, but otherwise I could move about with impunity.

I'm not normally a nature lover. My business is business, and business is rarely conducted in the middle of a rain forest. But even I have to admit that the natural splendor of Thyferra, even with well over half the world covered in alazhi fields, was magnificent. From the air, the planet appeared completely uninhabited except for Xozhixi and a few other small settlements. That's because the most industrial work in the bacta industry -- aside from bureaucratic wheeling and dealing -- was done underground, by Vratix laborers. As for their own homes, the native villages and towns were built into the trees of the rain forests that covered every landmass, connected by long sloping archways and artistically designed paths allowing easy travel for anyone with four legs and two arms. It reminded me of Kashyyyk, redesigned by giant bugs.



A Vratix

Seeqov Thranx herself was to be my partner, which was convenient, if a little dangerous. Vratix are hermaphrodites, but hundreds of years of contact with Humans means that metropolitan Vratix like Thranx usually identified more with one sex than the other.

I don't like working with partners and very nearly quit on the spot. I knew nothing about the Seeqov hive-clan or Thranx herself. But, in the end, I decided that I couldn't avoid getting saddled with at least one of them, and I'd already seen enough of Thranx to know we'd work well together. For one thing, she's a wicked sabacc player -- a rare enough challenge anywhere, let alone on this giant hive of a planet.

Though an operative for the Ashern, Thranx did have a long and legitimate career as a field inspector and research scientist. She was known planetwide for helping to eradicate a Rodian fungus epidemic that threatened the entire harvest of the southern hemisphere just five years ago. (The entire incident was kept secret from the galactic public and, according to Xucphra and Zaltin records, they each separately solved the crisis without Vratix help. They can say what they want, but I know the truth). Around this same time, she was first contacted by the fledgling Ashern and recruited into the movement. Since then, she's become a master of something alien to the hive-minded creatures -- deception. Unlike most idealists, she was able to see the situation from all sides.

Of course, not even Thranx saw the Empire coming. I did, naturally, but no one ever asked me.

Thranx: Female-oriented Vratix Expert 12/Scoundrel 2: Init +1 (Dex); Defense 19 (+1 Dex, +4 class, +2 natural); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 7/11; Atk +10/+5 melee (1d4+1, claw) or +10/+5 melee (2d4+2, vibrodagger), +10/+5 ranged (3d4, holdout blaster); SQ Illicit barter, lucky (1/day), species traits [see *Ultimate Alien Anthology*]; SV Fort +6, Ref +10, Will +14; SZ M; FP 2; DSP 6; Rep +6; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 20, Wis 18, Cha 14. Challenge Code C.

Equipment: Datapad, field laboratory kit, hold-out blaster, private apartment (Xozhixi), vibrodagger.

Skills: Appraise +20, Bluff +15, Computer Use +20, Craft (bacta) +20, Disable Device +18, Gamble +19, Gather Information +17, Knowledge (biology) +23, Knowledge (chemistry) +20, Knowledge (medicine) +23, Knowledge (Thyferra) +20, Profession (doctor) +12, Profession (field inspector) +14, Read/Write Basic, Read/Write Vratix, Speak Arkanian, Speak Basic, Speak Ithorese, Speak Kubazi, Speak Lepi, Speak Ryll, Speak Vratix, Treat Injury +23.

Feats: Fame, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Emphasis (Knowledge [biology]), Skill Emphasis (Knowledge [medicine]), Skill Emphasis (Profession [doctor]), Skill Emphasis (Treat Injury), Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

Part 3: Fields of Dreams

Compiled by Cory J. Herndon

Historical Notes

According to his or her memoirs, the following incident took place only nine years before the Clone Wars erupted on Geonosis. The Bloodletter's assignment was long-term, and after over a year of work, the objective was in sight.

Thrive or Die: Memoirs of the Bloodletter

Excerpted from Chapter 9: Killing Field

The Ashern were a smart bunch. They saw that the Vratix couldn't possibly hold onto the kinds of freedoms and planetary control they had during the Thriving Season unless they were willing to get into the ditch with Xucphra and Zaltin. The newly elected Vratix government seemed to mean well, but the Ashern saw, correctly, that allowing even more alien intervention (and interference) in their planetary economy would cause only a temporary boom. Eventually, one or more of those companies -- probably Xucphra or Zaltin, or maybe even a Hutt front business -- would make a power play.

The Ashern plan was simple. I was to move about to key alazhi fields that were secretly under Ashern control.

At these fields, the Vratix were farming a very special kind of alazhi. The Ashern believed that this new hybrid plant would be so remarkable, such an improvement on the original product, that the Ashern themselves would soon drive Xucphra and Zaltin off the planet -- or at least cut them down to size, leaving the Vratix in true control of their ecology, economy, and government. I tried to learn more about the hybrid -- specifically, if it was a hybrid plant, what was the second source of genetic material? -- but even Thranx rebuffed my questions. She trusted me, she claimed (which shouldn't have gratified me as much as it did), but she could take no chances. Besides, it wasn't information I needed to know.

These secret fields were easier to conceal than you'd think; in fact, the Ashern hid them in plain sight. Some of them stretched for hundreds of kilometers, broken up into subsections that were haphazardly organized at best. My first job was to inspect the fields for real -- hybrids could be especially susceptible to disease -- and aid the entire operation by secretly delivering cargo that made the hybrid process possible. I wasn't allowed to open the cargo, but again, the job didn't call for me to know what I was transporting. And that suited me fine.

We were well over a year into the project when the attack came. Thranx and I had set down outside one of the larger Xucphra fields and set out on foot to the Ashern's hidden field.

The field was empty. That should have been the first indication that something was wrong, but I'd grown too complacent in the previous year. I should have known better. Harvest was only two days away, and the fields should have been crawling with Vratix workers spraying down the plants with a natural preservative that would keep them fresh for transport. At the very least, an Ashern agent should have been there to meet us.

I turned to relay this fact to Thranx when a blaster bolt slammed into her upper back, sending her stumbling into me and knocking me into the soggy alazhi field.



At first, my only concern was oxygen. Thranx's torso had me pinned face first in the muck. I wriggled a bit, but she didn't move. Whoever had shot her was probably looking right at me, waiting for me to show some sign of life. With great physical effort, I forced my mind away from the need for air and focused all my attention on the information entering my brain through the right ear, the only part of my head above the waterline of the bog.

Footsteps. Human footsteps, getting closer. At this point, my lungs were aching for air, and I felt myself starting to blackout. Hoping my unseen enemy was close enough, I pushed off with both arms from the solid bottom of the alazhi field, sending muck and plants flying and Thrax -- whose status I still hadn't ascertained -- tumbling over into the field.

I found myself staring at an image from a historical holodrama. An honest-to-Zim *Mandalorian warrior* stood there in gleaming silver-and-blue armor, holding a blaster pointed at my forehead. Then he pulled the trigger and everything went black.

Part 4: The Kolcta Generation

Compiled by Cory J. Herndon

Thrive or Die: Memoirs of the Bloodletter

Excerpted from Chapter 10: Medicinal Purposes

I should have died. In fact, to be honest, I'm pretty sure I *did* die. Mandalorian blasters don't have a stun setting. I'd never seen an actual Mandalorian before that day, but collectors have prized their weapon designs for centuries. I own a pair myself that supposedly once belonged to the patriarch of the Ordo clan. I've never missed once with those blasters. Too bad I didn't have them with me that day.

I don't know how long I was out -- or dead -- but I know why I'm alive telling you this today: Seeqov Thrax.

I came to in the alazhi field. Judging from the sun's position in the sky, I'd either been out for an hour or a day and an hour (which wouldn't have surprised me, considering the way I felt). Thrax's big, bug-eyed head was hanging low over my face, and she was chittering something in Vratix I didn't quite understand. It may have been a song, now that I think about it. Vratix music usually doesn't use words. She was patting at my forehead with a damp rag she held in one claw. There was no sign of the Mandalorian anywhere.

That I even had a forehead surprised me. I could barely speak, but I managed to ask what had happened.

"We are pleased to see you alive, [REDACTED]," she replied. "For we shall soon be dead."

Vratix are hive-minded creatures, and they never use a first-person singular pronoun in my experience, even when speaking Basic. Therefore, she wasn't saying we were *both* doomed. Just her.

I raised a hand to my forehead and felt a moist but complete skull still attached to my shoulders. Could the Mandalorian have missed?

"You were mortally injured," Thrax continued. "The blue one shot you in the face."

"I remember," I managed. "What about you? If I survived . . ."

"You survived because of me," she clicked, "And because of this." She held the rag aloft, and I took a closer look. It was my own tunic, saturated with --

"*Bacta*?" I said when the distinctive smell hit my nostrils. "No, wait, it's not quite right. Where did it come from?"

"From us, of course," Thrax said, cocking her head in a way that I knew was her version of a smirk. "Using chemicals from our own torso, and the plants you see around us." She let out a tinny sound that I knew was a Vratix sigh. "We will soon be dead. We must tell you the secret of the Ashern fields. You have a right to know what you've been hired to do, and no one else is authorized to share this secret. But I trust you, Human, even if my superiors do not."

I simply nodded.

"You noted that this does not smell like bacta, and you are correct. It is *not* bacta. It is kolcta."

"Kolcta? What's that, some kind of super-bacta?" I asked.

"You are wise," Thrax replied. "If simplistic. Do you know what kolto is?"

"A Thyferran sabacc variant?"

"No," she chattered, and I could hear her breathing slits wheezing with effort. "It is a legend in the medical

establishment. An ancient medicine that made bacta look no more potent than a strong glass of lum. But it has not grown wild for millennia."

"Where did it come from? What makes it so special?"

"We do not know whence it came, though it was definitely rich in water; the plant can't grow without a lot of it," Thrax said. "This trait is shared by the alazhi, which has allowed us to grow this hybrid kolazhi right under the noses of the cartel. The preserved seeds were acquired by my superiors on the black market, but it was Seeqov that learned how to splice the DNA into the alazhi."

"What's so special about it?" I repeated.

"For one, it can be converted into a potent healing fluid by a dying Vratix and used to heal a mortal blaster wound to a Human forehead," she offered. "The kolazhi is so potent that no refining is necessary."

"You mean you made some right here, on the spot?"

"Yes," Thrax said.

"But if any Vratix anywhere could turn itself into a 'kolcta' factory . . ."

"The cartels would have no industry to manage. We would -- how do you say, 'cut out the middleman' and finally be independent of the cartels. We would be a free people once again."

With effort, I pulled myself to my feet. I placed my hands gently on either side of Thrax's insectoid face and smiled. "Thank you. That's precisely what I needed to know." With a quick flick, I snapped her head clean from her shoulders and tossed it into the soggy kolazhi field before she'd stopped chittering.

The Ashern paid well, and so did the Cartels, but someone else had already paid me even better. Within 48 hours, I had caught a transport to Coruscant. Within a week, a mysterious blight had settled into every one of the kolazhi fields except one. I personally oversaw the harvesting of that field and delivered several tons of the galaxy's only known kolcta to my client within a month. He claimed to suffer from a degenerative aging disease and needed the kolcta to keep himself young. Whatever. I was a rich man.

The Ashern recovered, of course, though I don't think they ever started pursuing the production of kolcta again. My own personal supply will run out soon, and by then I may start to age myself.

Maybe then I'll retire to Thyferra. It was a nice place to work.



Help! This bacta deformed my ribcage!

GM Notes: Kolcta

The Bloodletter had assumed that his/her personal stash and the supply delivered to his Very Important Client was the last kolcta ever produced. But despite the Bloodletter's claims and the thoroughness of his/her efforts, a scant few hidden fields survived eradication on Thyferra, and new kolcta was produced in small lots up to the end of the Galactic Civil War. Though scholars disagree on the details, most agree that the kolazhi fields that survived did so as a result of the violent efforts of the other, less subtle operative working for the Bloodletter's employer, the "blue one" who shot the corporate spy in the face.

The hybrid kolazhi plant is difficult to discern from the purebred variety, but a Knowledge (botany) check against DC 20 will allow a character to recognize that the plant is no ordinary alazhi.

Unlike bacta, kolcta is not produced in quantities to make submersion in a tank practical. The fluid is so potent, however, that a simple cloth soaked in the material and wrapped tightly around a wound is sufficient, and this is usually how personal physicians apply it and dealers sell it (sealed in plasteel foil packaging that must be cut or torn open). Sufficient kolcta treatment can reattach severed limbs and even allow the user to cheat death, as long

as kolcta is applied within five minutes. In game terms, this means a character that's been killed can be pulled back from the brink (restored to 1 Wound Point). Otherwise, a manually applied kolcta "spit bath" heals a character much more rapidly than total submersion in a bacta tank: Vitality returns at a rate of 3 points per minute (ten rounds), and wounds return at a rate of 1 per minute. A kolcta treatment dries out after five minutes and cannot be reused. To locate a kolcta package for sale, a character must make a DC 40 Gather Information check, adding his or her Reputation score to the roll.

Kolcta also can be ingested to counter the effects of aging, but only two individuals -- the Bloodletter and his mysterious client -- have ever owned enough of the substance to do so regularly. During the Rebellion era, only the very rich or powerful have access to kolcta treatment packages, and after the Battle of Endor, it is not available at all.

Kolcta Treatment Package

Cost: 150,000 credits

Weight: 2 kg